



General Assembly

January Session, 2017

Raised Bill No. 7112

LCO No. 4080



Referred to Committee on COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

Introduced by:
(KID)

AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 17a-106a of the general statutes is repealed and
2 the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2017*):

3 (a) For purposes of this section, "children's advocacy center" means
4 a child-focused, trauma-informed, facility-based program that fosters
5 collaboration between professionals in the fields of law enforcement,
6 child protection, mental health, forensic interviewing, medicine and
7 victim advocacy in interviewing or meeting with children, children's
8 parents, guardians or other caregivers, in order to make decisions
9 regarding the investigation and prosecution of allegations of child
10 abuse or neglect or trafficking, as defined in section 46a-170, of
11 children as well as the safety, treatment and provision of services to
12 alleged victims of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children.

13 [(a)] (b) The Commissioner of Children and Families, as department
14 head of the lead agency, and the appropriate state's attorney [may]
15 shall establish multidisciplinary teams for the [purpose] purposes of

16 (1) reviewing particular cases or particular types of cases, [or to
17 coordinate the prevention, intervention and treatment] (2)
18 coordinating the intervention in and prevention of child abuse or
19 neglect or trafficking of children and the treatment of such children in
20 each judicial district, [or to review] (3) reviewing selected cases of child
21 abuse or neglect or [cases involving the trafficking, as defined in
22 section 46a-170, of minor children. The purpose of such
23 multidisciplinary teams is to advance and coordinate] trafficking of
24 children, (4) advancing and coordinating the prompt investigation of
25 suspected cases of child abuse or neglect [, to reduce] or trafficking of
26 children, (5) reducing the trauma [of any child victim] experienced by
27 alleged victims of such abuse or neglect or trafficking and, [to ensure]
28 (6) ensuring the protection and treatment of [the child] such children
29 and their families. The head of the local law enforcement agency or
30 [his or her] such head's designee may request the assistance of the
31 Division of State Police within the Department of Emergency Services
32 and Public Protection [for] in order to accomplish such purposes.

33 [(b)] (c) Each multidisciplinary team shall consist of at least one
34 representative of each of the following: (1) The state's attorney of the
35 judicial district of [the] such multidisciplinary team, or such state's
36 attorney's designee; (2) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or
37 the commissioner's designee; (3) the [head] heads of the local or state
38 law enforcement agencies, or [his or her designee] such heads'
39 designees; (4) a health care professional with substantial experience in
40 the diagnosis and treatment of abused or neglected children, who shall
41 be designated by [the] such multidisciplinary team members; (5) a
42 member, where appropriate, of a youth service bureau; (6) a mental
43 health professional with substantial experience in the treatment of
44 abused or neglected children, who shall be designated by [the] such
45 multidisciplinary team members; [and] (7) a forensic interviewer, who
46 shall be designated by such multidisciplinary team members; (8) a
47 victim advocate, who shall be designated by such multidisciplinary
48 team members; and (9) any other appropriate individual with

49 expertise in the welfare of children that the members of [the] such
50 multidisciplinary team deem necessary. Each multidisciplinary team
51 shall select a chairperson. [A] Each multidisciplinary team may invite
52 experts to participate in the review of any case and may invite any
53 other individual with particular information germane to the case to
54 participate in such review, provided the expert or individual shall
55 have the same protection and obligations under subsections [(f) and]
56 (g) to (i), inclusive, of this section as members of [the] such
57 multidisciplinary team.

58 [(c) The Governor's task force for justice for abused children,
59 through the subcommittee comprised of individuals with expertise in
60 the investigation of child abuse and neglect, shall: (1) Establish and
61 modify standards to be observed by multidisciplinary teams; (2)
62 review protocols of the multidisciplinary teams; and (3) monitor and
63 evaluate multidisciplinary teams and make recommendations for
64 modifications to the system of multidisciplinary teams.]

65 (d) Children's advocacy centers may assist multidisciplinary teams
66 in the investigation of allegations of child abuse or neglect or
67 trafficking of children. Such centers may assist such multidisciplinary
68 teams by (1) providing safe, child and family-friendly settings that
69 maintain the privacy of children and their families; (2) establishing
70 policies and procedures that are culturally competent; (3) assisting
71 such multidisciplinary teams in ensuring that the support and services
72 provided by such multidisciplinary teams meet national accreditation
73 standards established by the National Children's Alliance; (4) assisting
74 in the development of written protocols for an interdisciplinary and
75 coordinated approach to the investigation of allegations of child abuse
76 or neglect or trafficking of children; (5) providing forensic interviews
77 of children that (A) are conducted by a trained forensic interviewer, (B)
78 are recorded in a digital format, (C) solicit information in an unbiased,
79 fact-finding manner that is culturally sensitive and appropriate for
80 each child's developmental stage, (D) support accurate and fair
81 decision making by such multidisciplinary teams, and (E) may be

82 observed by members of such multidisciplinary teams involved in
83 such investigation whenever possible; (6) providing specialized
84 medical evaluation and treatment, mental health services and support
85 and advocacy services to children at such centers or through
86 coordination with and referral to other appropriate providers of such
87 services; (7) providing regular case review for the purpose of aiding in
88 decision making, problem solving, systems coordination and
89 information sharing concerning the status of cases and the services
90 required by children and their families; (8) providing a comprehensive
91 tracking system for monitoring the progress and outcomes of cases;
92 and (9) participating in an annual evaluation of such multidisciplinary
93 teams' effectiveness and operations, which may include providing a
94 report to the Department of Children and Families, the Governor's task
95 force on justice for abused children, the Connecticut Children's
96 Alliance and the National Children's Alliance.

97 (e) The Connecticut Children's Alliance, Inc. may (1) coordinate and
98 facilitate the exchange of information among children's advocacy
99 centers; (2) provide technical assistance to municipalities in order to
100 support the establishment, growth and accreditation of children's
101 advocacy centers; (3) educate the public and the General Assembly on
102 the needs of victims of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children;
103 (4) provide or coordinate multidisciplinary training opportunities that
104 support a comprehensive response to allegations of child abuse or
105 neglect or trafficking of children; (5) conduct annual evaluations of
106 children's advocacy centers and their associated multidisciplinary
107 teams; and (6) submit a report annually to the Governor's task force on
108 justice for abused children and the General Assembly concerning
109 outcomes from each children's advocacy center.

110 [(d)] (f) All criminal investigative work of [the] multidisciplinary
111 teams shall be undertaken by members of [the team] such
112 multidisciplinary teams who are law enforcement officers and all child
113 protection investigative work of [the] such multidisciplinary teams
114 shall be undertaken by members of [the team] such multidisciplinary

115 teams who represent the Department of Children and Families,
116 provided such representatives [of the department] may coordinate [all]
117 investigative work with such multidisciplinary teams and rely upon
118 information generated by [the team] such multidisciplinary teams in
119 the course of such department's investigations. The protocols,
120 procedures and standards of [the] such multidisciplinary teams shall
121 not supersede the protocols, procedures and standards of the agencies
122 who are [on the multidisciplinary team] represented by members of
123 such multidisciplinary teams.

124 [(e)] (g) Each multidisciplinary team shall have access to and may
125 copy any record, transcript, document, photograph or other data
126 pertaining to an alleged child victim within the possession of the
127 Department of Children and Families, any public or private medical
128 facility or any public or private health professional provided, in the
129 case of confidential information, the coordinator of [the] such
130 multidisciplinary team, or such coordinator's designee, identifies the
131 record in writing and certifies, under oath, that the record sought is
132 necessary to investigate child abuse or neglect and that [the] such
133 multidisciplinary team will maintain the record as confidential. No
134 person who provides access to or copies of such record upon delivery
135 of certification under this section shall be liable to any third party for
136 such action. [The] Such multidisciplinary team shall not be [deemed to
137 be] a public agency [under] as defined in section 1-200, for the
138 purposes of the Freedom of Information Act.

139 [(f)] (h) No person shall disclose information obtained from a
140 meeting of [the] a multidisciplinary team without the consent of the
141 participant of the meeting who provided such information unless
142 disclosure is ordered by a court of competent jurisdiction or is
143 necessary to comply with the provisions of the Constitution of the state
144 of Connecticut.

145 [(g)] (i) Each multidisciplinary team shall maintain records of
146 meetings that include, but are not limited to, the name of the alleged

147 victim and perpetrator, the names of the members of [the] such
148 multidisciplinary team and [their] such members' positions, the
149 decision or recommendation of [the] such multidisciplinary team and
150 information regarding support services provided. In any proceeding to
151 gain access to such records or testimony concerning matters discussed
152 at [a meeting] such meetings, the privileges from disclosure applicable
153 to the information provided by each of the participants at [the] such
154 meeting shall apply to all participants.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
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Section 1	<i>July 1, 2017</i>	17a-106a
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Statement of Purpose:

To define "children's advocacy center", clarify the purposes of multidisciplinary teams established by the Commissioner of Children and Families, permit such centers to assist multidisciplinary teams in the investigation of allegations of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children and to permit the Connecticut Children's Alliance, Inc. to provide assistance to such centers.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]